United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Elko Field Office
Elko, Nevada

TAYLOR FIRE
EMERGENCY STABILIZATION AND REHABILITATION PLAN
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT AND DECISION RECORD
BLM/EK/PL-2006/024

The Taylor Fire (C1TE) started in Independence Valley north of Taylor Canyon, Nevada, on July 27, 2006 and grew rapidly in size. The fire burned a total of 4,514 acres by the time it was contained on August 3, 2006, of which 798 acres are Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed public lands, 3 acres are U.S. Forest Service land, and 3,713 acres are private land. Elevations range from 5,838 feet (1,780 meters) to 7,820 feet (2,384 meters) above mean sea level. A National Interagency Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team assessed the damage to public lands, and prepared the Taylor Fire Emergency Stabilization (ES) Plan. To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, the BAER team also prepared the combined Taylor Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment (EA). The damage assessment, plans, EA, and associated documents are available for inspection upon request to the BLM, Elko Field Office.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the August 2006 Taylor Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan EA, I have determined that the proposed action will not have a significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required prior to approval and implementation of the proposed plan.

Decision

It is my decision to implement the Taylor Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan, as described in the EA and summarized below.

Planting of Multiple Species Seed Mixtures

Broadcast seed approximately 200 acres with mountain big sagebrush, basin big sagebrush, bluebunch wheatgrass, and Western yarrow. This seed will be applied on swales, draws and ephemeral drainage areas throughout the burn area that were pre-burn big sagebrush sites. Treatment will be completed using a helicopter and seed broadcaster. Seed will be applied when weather conditions are favorable to allow for coverage by snow or adequate moisture, in late fall or early winter.

Dozer Line Seeding

The dozer lines will be seeded utilizing a broadcast and drag method. Broadcast seeding methods will be done utilizing either an ATV, pickup, or by hand. The dozer line will be dragged using a harrow or equivalent piece of equipment to provide full soil contact of the

seeded species, in order to increase the success of treatment. The dozer lines will be seeded with a mixture, such as bluebunch wheatgrass, western yarrow, and blue flax.

Antelope Bitterbrush Seedling/Seedling Planting

In the event that bitterbrush recruitment from seed or young to mature age class plant re-sprouting is not observed through monitoring by Spring 2008, areas on the burn will be considered for seeding or seedling plantings. The entire public lands portion has ecological sites with bitterbrush as a vegetative component. Methods considered for establishing bitterbrush include, but are not limited to, hand-seeding, mechanical (e.g. drill seeding or Hansen Seed Dribbler) seeding, and planting and protection of bare root stock or container stock.

Protective Fences

Reconstruct/repair federally owned protective fences on approximately 2.5 miles burned by the Taylor Fire. Burned fence materials, including wire, will be removed. Fences will be used to protect seeded areas or areas managed for natural recovery from livestock grazing. Fences are to be established on original fence line locations.

Construct new temporary fences to protect burned areas on the Taylor Fire. The 3.5 miles of fence are necessary to prevent grazing by livestock on burned areas needing grazing rest or to protect recovering sensitive species. All temporary protective fences will tie into existing fences or natural barriers. Fences are to be established along the fire perimeter where no previous fence existed and where needed to protect recovering sites.

Noxious Weed Detection and Treatment

Noxious weed treatment will provide for control of known nonnative weed infestations within the Taylor Fire perimeter prior to seed-set and maturation. Control of these Nevada listed noxious weeds needs to be conducted or they will spread into non-infested areas of the burn. Integrated pest management techniques (herbicides, biological, mechanical, and cultural control methods) will be used as appropriate to prevent the spread and establishment of noxious weeds within the fire area. No cost was developed for possible hand grubbing of weeds since so few weeds will be treated in this manner, and grubbing will occur in association with spraying.

Conduct noxious weed detection surveys for possible invasion of noxious weeds on roads, hand lines, dozerlines, and other disturbed areas within the Taylor Fire perimeter. Monitor existing noxious weed infestations within the burned area to determine if expansion is occurring into non-infested areas. An inventory will be conducted for noxious weeds near existing locations and in areas that have a high probability for invasion within the burned area.

Sign Installation

Two rock fall hazard signs will be installed on State Highway 226 on both sides of the Taylor Fire.

Grazing Closure

Livestock grazing will be removed from the burned area in order to allow the burned and seeded vegetation to successfully establish. Post-fire grazing management, including the period of time needed for closure, will be determined based on coordination, cooperation, and consultation with

the interested public, monitoring, and achievement of site specific resource objectives. The closure will occur for a minimum of two growing seasons or until establishment objectives are met, in order to provide an adequate amount of time to allow the seeded vegetation to establish and plant species not damaged by the wildfire to respond to natural revegetation. The burned area will be reopened to livestock grazing once the establishment objectives in any fire closure agreements/decisions have been met.

Monitoring

Areas within the Taylor Fire burned from low soil burn severity to high, with considerable unburned islands creating a mosaic effect throughout the burned area. The Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team vegetation and watershed groups, in consultation with the range and natural resource staff of the Elko Field Office, have recommended treatments to detect and treat noxious weeds. Monitor relic aspen stands for post fire regeneration and impacts from grazing and wildlife. A resource specialist from the Field Office will provide program oversight for this specification.

Rationale

Implementation of the proposed action described in the Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan EA for the Taylor Fire will protect soils in the burned area, including preventing potential loss of soil due to wind and water erosion; will reduce potential invasion and establishment of noxious weeds and cheatgrass; will provide quality forage for livestock and wildlife; and will facilitate meeting established standards and guidelines for livestock grazing.

Exclusion of livestock grazing is necessary to allow seedling establishment, restore plant vigor and seed production, and to allow reestablishment of preferred species and to deter invasion of undesirable species. The proposed fence will be constructed around the burn perimeter to keep grazing animals off the recovering burn to allow establishment of seeded and pre-fire vegetation species. This temporary fencing will be used in conjunction with existing fences to protect the burn area from grazing. This fencing and subsequent rest from grazing will allow for plants to re-establish and develop effective root depths and root reserves. Vegetation establishment will help reduce the risk of accelerated soil erosion and mud flows into perennial and intermittent streams that flow through the burned area and provide for soil stabilization. Vegetation associated with wetlands, riparian zones, and floodplains will be allowed to reestablish.

The broadcast seedings within swales, draws and ephemeral drainage will provide for soil stabilization and will reduce the potential invasion of cheatgrass, Scotch thistle and other invasive weeds. The seedings will also provide cover and forage for area wildlife populations and nesting habitat for migratory birds. Successful seeding of some drainages and areas near the perennial streams in Waterpipe and Starvation Canyons will help reduce runoff and trap sediment, which will help prevent further degradation to the water quality. Taylor and Waterpipe Canyon creeks provide habitat for redband trout, a Nevada State and BLM sensitive specie. Successful seedings near these streams will also help protect this aquatic species habitat from receiving excessive amounts of sediment and may provide for streambank stabilization.

Control of noxious weeds is consistent with the management plans for the resource and will help protect the ecological integrity, biodiversity, and site productivity of this shrub-steppe plant

community. Treatment of noxious weeds is necessary to comply with Nevada State Laws, to implement the Integrated Weed Management Program of the Elko Field Office, and to be responsible neighbors to the adjacent private landowners. Working cooperatively with local weed management groups and private landowners will achieve better weed management.

Installation of the warning signs is essential to public health and safety. These signs are necessary to inform the public of immediate danger posed by rock fall along the highway.

The proposed action conforms to the 1987 Elko Resource Management Plan (RMP), as it was amended for fire management on September 29, 2004. The decision for fire rehabilitation from the Approved Fire Management Amendment, page 20, is to "Conduct fire rehabilitation activities to emulate historic or pre-fire ecosystem structure, functioning, diversity and/or to restore a healthy stable ecosystem." The proposed action is consistent with resource objectives of the plan and with other Federal, state, local and tribal laws, regulations, policies and plans to the maximum extent possible.

Approval and Implementation Date

This wildfire management decision is issued under 43 CFR 4190.1 and is effective immediately. The BLM has made the determination that vegetation, soil, or other resources on the public lands are at risk of wildfire due to drought, fuels buildup, or other reasons, or at immediate risk of erosion or other damage due to wildfire. Thus, notwithstanding the provisions of 43 CFR 4.21(a)(1), filing a notice of appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 does not automatically suspend the effect of the decision. The Interior Board of Land Appeals must decide an appeal of this decision within 60 days after all pleadings have been filed, and within 180 days after the appeal was filed. (43 CFR 4.416)

Administrative Review or Appeal Procedures

Within 30 days of receipt of this decision, parties who are adversely affected and believe it is incorrect have the right to appeal to the Department of the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with regulations at 43 CFR 4.4. Procedural information on "Taking Appeals to the Board of Land Appeals" can be obtained at the BLM, Elko Field Office. An appeal should be in writing and specify the reasons, clearly and concisely, as to why the decision is in error. A copy of the Statement of Reasons must also be supplied to this office. Also within 30 days of receipt of this decision, appellants have a right to file a petition for a stay (suspension) of the decision together with an appeal, in accordance with the regulations at 43 CFR 4.21. The appellant has the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

/s/ August 28, 2006

HELEN HANKINS Date
Field Manager